



Procrastination. We all know it. We've all been victims of it. And despite our good intentions, sometimes it develops into a bad habit that's hard to break.

A procrastinator has a false sense of security. When you think about it, someone who is procrastinating feels optimistic that everything is in control, so there is plenty of time to goof off. They often misjudge the time it will take to complete a task; you have probably found that a task you estimated to take 30 minutes often takes two hours, leaving you short. This is why procrastination has been likened to a credit card — it is easy and fun at first, but then you get the bill. And the interest is paid in feelings of dread, anxiety, helplessness, and self-hatred.

According to [Adam Price Ph.D. with Psychology Today](#), there are four underlying issues that contribute to procrastination. Let's look at the reasons that could be behind procrastination before we delve into solutions.

1. Anger.

The most common cause of procrastination I see in opt-outs is anger; anger towards the authority of parents and teachers so they get even by delaying work or making a half-hearted effort. This form of revenge is manipulative and passive-aggressive, but also highly effective, because it takes authority figures' power away and drives them crazy.

2. Playing the Victim.

Even though the procrastinator is imprisoned in a jail of their own making, they see themselves as the victim of those who set expectations and call the shots. They feel trapped in a no-win situation: Doing their work brings on uncomfortable feelings, but so does not doing it (though just not now). The victim approaches homework feeling that they have to do it, never that they want to.

3. Self-Doubt.

Many students are experiencing self-doubt underneath their anger and resentment. Students don't often start out feeling so hopeless. It takes years of questioning their own skills, wondering whether they have what it takes. Many teenager procrastinators did better in school when they were younger. However, when school became more challenging (as it always does), rather than step up the effort, they took their foot off the gas pedal.

4. Perfectionism.

A perfectionist may postpone starting a project because they feel overwhelmed by the sheer amount of energy it will take to do something perfectly. They will refer to work with words like "ought," "must," "have to," and "should." High standards are great; they give us something to aim for. Perfectionism takes hold when the failure to meet these

expectations becomes unacceptable. Perfectionists who procrastinate set unrealistic expectations and then avoid work to rid themselves of the anxiety it causes.

Whatever the cause of procrastination, it's important to take even small steps towards lessening its effects. Think about these four ways to overcome procrastination, and how you could use them in your own life.

- **Nip procrastination in the bud.** Recognize this cycle early on, and imagine where it will lead you. By acting early, even if just to do a little, you can avoid the downward spiral.
- **Set small goals to focus on,** rather than on a big task that seems like too much. Break the assignment or study activity into little pieces. Congratulate yourself as you finish a small task. Making a little progress will help increase your motivation to do some more.
- **Make a deal with yourself.** Promise yourself a reward for finishing the task, or a reasonable chunk of it. Tell yourself that you'll watch some TV, listen to a song you like, or call a friend after you are done.
- **Concentrate on the most recent tasks** when too much has piled up. Figure out what tomorrow's lecture is going to be about, or what homework assignment is due next, and put your energy into preparing for those. This way, you can enjoy a small win of a more positive class experience, because you understand what's being said a bit better and have turned in a more complete assignment on time.

What other strategies have you used to avoid procrastination?

Procrastination tips from Dr. Winston Sieck: <https://thinkeracademy.com/how-to-stop-procrastinating-homework/>